



Mary Riley Styles Public Library

Senior Book Discussion Series

2011-2012

Tuesday, September 13: ***Barefoot in Baghdad*** by Manal Omar

An American aid worker of Palestinian descent, Omar left family and a job at the World Bank in the Washington, D.C. area for Baghdad in 2003 in order to help Iraqi women navigate the post-invasion turmoil in her new position at Women for Women International. Her book chronicles her experiences in war-torn Iraq, detailing the curtailed options facing many Iraqi women and the increasing dangers facing aid workers. Omar provides a rare glimpse into Iraqi life as she describes not only the dangers but also the joys, small and great.

Tuesday, October 25: ***The Bridge of San Luis Rey*** by Thornton Wilder

"On Friday noon, July the twentieth, 1714, the finest bridge in all Peru broke and precipitated five travelers into the gulf below." With this celebrated sentence Thornton Wilder begins *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, one of the towering achievements in American fiction and a novel read throughout the world. The 1928 Pulitzer Prize winner tells the story of a friar who witnesses the accident and then goes about inquiring into the lives of the victims, seeking some sort of cosmic answer to the question of why each had to die.

Tuesday, December 13: ***The Happiness Project*** by Gretchen Rubin

Gretchen Rubin had an epiphany one rainy afternoon in the unlikeliest of places: a city bus. "The days are long, but the years are short. Time is passing, and I'm not focusing enough on the things that really matter." In that moment, she decided to dedicate a year to her happiness project. In this lively and compelling account, Rubin chronicles her adventures during the 12 months she spent test-driving the wisdom of the ages, current scientific research, and lessons from popular culture about how to be happier.

Tuesday, January 24: ***The Sherlockian*** by Graham Moore

Moore's debut cleverly sets an accidental investigator on the track of an old document within the world of Sherlock Holmes' buffs. In 2010, Harold White is inducted into the pre-eminent Sherlockian society, the Baker Street Irregulars, at their annual dinner. During the festivities, scholar Alex Cale plans to present a long-lost diary penned by Arthur Conan Doyle, but someone strangles Cale before he can do so. Chapters alternate between White's amateur sleuthing in Europe and Doyle's own account of his search for a serial killer.

Tuesday, March 13: ***The Good Daughter: A Memoir of My Mother's Hidden Life*** by Jasmin Darznik

Darznik's chance sighting of an old photograph of her mother, Lili, launches an unexpected and, at times, painful trip into her mother's past. At 14, Lili was married off to a man who would prove to be violent and abusive. Lili gave birth to a daughter, Sara, but when the abuse escalated, Lili knew she had no choice but to flee his house and seek a divorce—leaving Sara behind. Taken from tapes her mother sent her after Darznik discovered the photograph, this memoir is a beautifully recounted homage to her mother's life and struggles.

Tuesday, April 24: ***Passing Strange*** by Martha A. Sandweiss

During America's Gilded Age, Clarence King was a famous geologist, friend of wealthy, famous, and powerful men. What his family and friends did not know was that for 17 years, King lived secretly as James Todd, a black Pullman porter with a black wife and mixed-race children residing in Brooklyn. Devoted to his mother and half-siblings, restless and constantly in need of money, King relied on the largesse of his wealthy friends to help him support both families, never revealing his secret until he was near death.

Tuesday, June 5: ***Clara and Mr. Tiffany*** by Susan Vreeland

Against the unforgettable backdrop of New York near the turn of the 20th century, Susan Vreeland again breathes life into a work of art in this extraordinary novel. Clara Driscoll, head of Louis Comfort Tiffany's women's division, conceives of and designs nearly all of the iconic leaded-glass lamps for which Tiffany will be remembered. Never publicly acknowledged, Clara struggles with her desire for artistic recognition, the insurmountable challenges that she faces as a professional woman, and the personal world of her heart.